

Religion and Violence

Instructor: Rick Rogers

Office: 701-H Pray-Harrold

Course Times: TR 9:30-10:45

Course Location: 112 Roosevelt Hall

Office Hours: TR 12:30-1:30

Office Phone & Voice Mail: (734) 487-3067

Cell Phone & Voice Mail: (734) 546-5557

E-mail: RRogers@emich.edu

Home Page: <http://people.emich.edu/rrogers>

DESCRIPTION: This course explores the disturbing alliance between religion and violence in a variety of religious traditions and cultural contexts. In examining contemporary acts of religious hatred and terrorism we will try to understand the historical, social, ideological, political, and textual context from which such violent acts emerge. Central questions that inform the content of this course include the following: Why do individuals involved in terrorism rely so heavily on religious texts and traditions to give license to vengeful ideologies? What is the logic that provides moral justifications for religious violence? Why do Monotheistic religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism) have the most violent historical traditions? What religious texts are most commonly used to support violence? Does religious violence represent an aberration born of human weakness or a logical result of religious teachings? How might religious traditions transform themselves in order to root out violence and become the bearers of compassion, peace, and tolerance? How do interpretive traditions deal with scriptural texts used to support violence? What role might dialogue play as a tool of counter terrorism? These and other questions will be addressed during lectures and extensive class discussions, and with guest speakers from a variety of religious traditions.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Charles Selengut's *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil*, Akbar Ahmed and Brian Forst's *After Terror* and Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer's *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and Quran*. In addition, daily lecture and discussion outlines will be provided.

EVALUATION: Two mid-term take-home essay Exams (30% each), based on discussions of Selengut's and Kimball's books, a pre-discussion Review Paper of Nelson-Pallmeyer's book (20%) and five pre-discussion Reaction Papers (20%, collectively), based on selected essays from Ahmed and Forst's book.

CONSULTATION: Students may consult with the instructor during office hours, and may call or email the instructor anytime. Students should familiarize themselves with the course website and online Grade Post, where students will be able to keep track of their current grades. Also, on this website students can access online studies dealing with a variety of issues and biographical materials, some of which will be used in special assignments or in conjunction with exam essays. To access the website, simply go to Dr. Rogers' Home Page via the address at the top of this syllabus and click on the History 479 link in the schedule.